

**Interview with Tom Fleury**  
**Conducted by Sue Kovach Shuman for the**  
**Providence District History Project Providence Perspective**

**Sue:** It's July 21<sup>st</sup> 2010 and this is Sue Kovach Shuman and I'm talking with Tom Fleury of Vienna, Virginia for the Providence District History Project welcome.

**Tom:** Thank you.

**Sue:** Tell me a little bit about (oops phone rings okay thanks) you are a managing director of the Penrose Group right now which specializes in commercial real estate correct?

**Tom:** Correct.

**Sue:** Okay, but tell me, let's back up and tell a little bit about what brought you to this area. Tell me about your childhood a little bit.

**Tom:** Okay, I was the consummate army brat. My father was drafted in World War II and made a career of the Army; retired as an Army Colonel. Consequently back in the, ah I was born in 1947 so in the 50's and 60's we traveled extensively.

**Sue:** Overseas?

**Tom:** We spent three years in Germany other than that it was all pretty much domestic. But back in those days if you remember military units use to move together. The whole first infantry division would move and then the cavalry would move and whatever. So, ah, I literally had back when you use to have to fill out, when I was commissioned in the air force – and you have to fill out all of where you lived in your life. We had something in the neighborhood of 21 addresses; and I went to in 12 years of school I went to 18 different schools.

**Sue:** This helped you get to know people.

**Tom:** Ah, there was a good friend of mine her, that I kind of grew up with a little bit in my younger years who was the daughter of a, ah, very, very famous Army

General and her name was Christine Pearson who wrote a book back in the 1970's called Brat. And so everybody worries about brats. And what brats allow you to do is every year, every school, whatever – boy - if you're not willing to get in there and meet people and be open and put your hand out and shake people it could be a very, very lonely existence. So in the early years it was just kind of military. Your units moved together so you kind of had a continuity of friends in the elementary school and then after that it was sports and other activities that allowed you to make new friends every year of your life. So I look back at it as some people find it very traumatic; I find that probably one of the best preparations for life that I could have ever imagined.

So I finally graduated from High School in Celina Texas in 1965 and I went from there from what was at that time called Southwest Texas State Teachers College my freshman year became Southwest Texas State College and by the time I graduated in 1969 it was Southwest Texas State University. And because they want you to buy tee shirts and hats so about two years ago it's now called Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. There were 4,000 undergraduates when I was there which probably approaching 20,000 undergraduates now.

**Sue:** What did you study?

**Tom:** Ah, I was Bachelor of Business Administration and its claim to fame was it's the alma mater of Lyndon Johnson.

**Sue:** You had Lyndon Johnson pictures on the wall?

**Tom:** I did.

**Sue:** Okay.

**Tom:** Ah, he was building buildings and dormitories there when there were no people to put in them but back in his day the president of my University was his undersecretary of education. And his son was one of my fraternity brothers so I got to go to the White House for his swearing in.

**Sue:** Wow.

**Tom:** for Christmas one year. So, and I was also in Air Force ROTC in those days so it was all a great experience. I just took my wife back there three years ago and recounted what the old University was. It was just a massive campus.

**Sue:** Did you get some hats?

**Tom:** Yes I did. Yes, Texas – they have a tee shirt – all of that. So – and graduated in May of 1969. I was commissioned in 1969 into the Air Force as a second lieutenant. I got a graduate deferment to start graduation school at the University of Texas. And a month later as all of us back in that era did – it was the middle of the Vietnam War that was jerked and I reported back to duty on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1969 to Shepherd Air Force Base. And spent four and a half years as an Air Force Officer, Medical Service Corps officer in the Air Force which took me to Shepherd Air Force Base for training and then to McConnell Air Force Base and then to Scott for training and whatever. I was then TDY'd to Cameron Bay in Vietnam for a while as an Air Back Officer. And I got base of choice back to Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin, Texas. And shortly thereafter decided not to make a career of the Military I'd given at that time, you know, most of my life to the military and I got out, as a lot of guys my era did at that time, with every intention of going into hospital administration on the west coast. Then I came back to visit my Mom and Dad in Arlington when my dad was back at the pentagon.

While I was here there was a job opening at Fairfax Hospital and I went over there and work there for about a year and a half.

**Sue:** what were you doing?

**Tom:** I was the ah – worked for John War in medical purchasing. And I had worked construction every summer of my life. Growing up back in those days if you didn't work summers you didn't pay for your college, you didn't get Levis when everybody else was wearing sears jeans and all of that. And I always had this inkling to go into construction; and a job came open at West Group which in those days was called Management Associates Incorporated.

**Sue:** And what year was this approximately?

**Tom:** 1973.

**Sue:** Okay.

**Tom:** And met Jerry Halpin and Tom Nicholson and Chuck Ewing and didn't know a tongue depressor from a two by four but great mentors they were. And they were all very military. You know Chuck was a West Point graduate and Tom was a Merchant Marine Academy graduate and Jerry had a wonderful career in World War II in the navy. And all the property managers were retired Army and Air Force Colonels.

**Sue:** Now what were you actually doing there? You said

**Tom:** I started out as a contract and purchasing guy. I was initially letting; you know bidding out office buildings and tenant work. And that's how I got started and the Boston Preston Blazedale and they put up with me and I learned a lot. And I did that until probably the early 1980's when all of a sudden the real emphasis that I had a knack for entitlements – getting land sites approved and building permit and whatever which you've all been into land use and zoning. I was with West Group from 1973 until 2005 and Jerry Halpin never paid a land use attorney; and that's what I did for all those years.

**Sue:** He never paid a land use attorney because that's what you were doing for him?

**Tom:** Well he thought that that's something you should be able to do yourself. We shouldn't have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to do a public process and so that became my stock in trade.

**Sue:** Okay.

**Tom:** And that's what I've done for a preponderance of my career. So I did all the land use zoning for Gannett and Freddie Mack and Cap One and Mitre and over the years brought all of those people to Tyson's corner and all of um needed rezonings or special exceptions, and site plans and all of that; and so that's what I did.

**Sue:** So your specialty has been part of what shaped this area; but it's still being shaped. Now you were showing me a book about Tysons Corner in the past and you're involved actively with what's going on there now – correct?

**Tom:** Right, Penrose Group. After leaving West Group in 2005 I did a one year consulting agreement with a firm downtown and talked them out of being a developer. And then I landed with old friends Al Van Metre for two and a half years and launched Van Metre Commercial and then Al passed away if you remember; and the bottom started to fall out of the market and was actually going to retire and I had done all the land use and zoning prior to leaving West Group for Park Crest. That's the high-rise condominium where the Harris Teeter and lofts are – and by happenstance they needed some work done on Park Crest and so I thought I'd come back and do that on a part time basis or whatever which evolved into coming back to work full time the last couple of years.

**Sue:** Are you enjoying it?

**Tom:** I am yeah. I don't know what I will do when I retire because this is it. So Park Crest project was one of my most favorite rezonings because it was a high-rise residential, very dense 3.0 did the first PRM (Planned Residential Mixed Use) in rezoning in Tysons.

**Sue:** Where exactly is Park Crest.

**Tom:** Park it's right at the corner of West Park Drive, Park Run Drive; it's a triangular piece of property which there now is the and Linda (Supervisor Linda Smyth) will tell you – she thanks me at every public hearing – we have a 68,000 square foot Harris Teeter and above that's four stories of loft apartments and then we built the first high rise 19 story condominium building there. Bottom fell out of the market so we're recovering from all of that. We just finished in May a proffer condition amendment to change a building type in selling off a couple acres to Avalon Bay to put a 5 story podium product in there. So the project is advancing

**Sue:** What is a podium product?

**Tom:** That's a very urban looking very Roslynnie, Clarendonie looking apartments with a very urban skin and it sits on a podium. The parking is exposed in the back and the parking is underneath, that's the podium part. It's called stick built podium

**Sue:** Okay.

**Tom:** you can still do it. So we just finished that, site plan will be in bonding soon and they'll close and that construction will start in October. So the point is I went downtown and I did entitlements on a building downtown.

**Sue:** Downtown meaning?

**Tom:** D.C.

**Sue:** In Washington okay.

**Tom:** In Washington 405 Mass. And then I went with Van Metre and did a bunch of stuff out in Loudon County; about 6 million square feet of entitlements out there. And I'm landed right back in Tysons cause this is, this is kind of my home. I've been here for almost 39 years.

**Sue:** And as you were saying before we turned the tape recorder on you've never lived in any one place so long.

**Tom:** No, no this is – you know between birth and age 23 or 24, I probably lived 30 different places. So this is now my home. Tysons corner I can truly say if I were you know on my tombstone I am a citizen of Tysons Corner. (Laughing)

**Sue:** Well Tysons Corner is still being developed and you have a large part role in that but what do you want Tysons Corner to be in 20 years; do you have a vision for it?

**Tom:** I will just repeat my testimony to the whole public hearing process: I was very involved and worked very, very hard – as hard as I've work on anything in my entire life, in the very early years to bring rail to Tysons. Back in the days when we were doing the environmental impact studies and you know it was just really hard to get it there. And then it was hard to keep hold of it and it was going to

bypass Tysons and all of that. And I worked very, very, hard in the early days to create the tax district to fund it. I do believe that rail to Tysons will be a tremendous thing in terms of access to Tysons. I think it will may or may not take the traffic off of the roads or whatever I think the real element is to get rail to the airport. And if you are going to get rail to the airport which should have occurred 30 years ago – connect our airports. We are the only major city in the world without a major connector to our major airports. That Tysons will in fact grow around the new rail.

In 20 years having seen almost 40 years the market will dictate the rate of that growth.

**Sue:** Tyson's has changed from in the 1960's this cow pasture, this farmland area and now of course it's kind of in-between; it's certainly not rural but it's certainly not a city; but what will be there in 20 years is more like an urban city correct?

**Tom:** It'll be taking shape of an urban city. I think the development will be different than the Balston, Roslyn, Clarendon corridor.

**Sue:** How so?

**Tom:** This is very narrow and very long. I think the way the TOD was developed through the master plan

**Sue:** TOD?

**Tom:** Transit Oriented Development.

**Sue:** Okay.

**Tom:** I think that you will see the development occur faster but not any faster than the market demands around the east and west stations.

**Sue:** Where are the east and west stations?

**Tom:** East is at the intersection of route 123 and Magarity Road that's the first station because that's the oldest properties around there. You know you've got Cap One there as a base, you've got Mitre there as a base, you've got Grumman

there as a base and there's a lot of old buildings that are beyond their useful existence so

**Sue:** How old is old?

**Tom:** Ah well the old West Gate buildings on Old Meadow Road they are approaching 50 years old.

**Sue:** Okay, are there any really old 100 year old properties?

**Tom:** No.

**Sue:** No, nothing like that left in the area?

**Tom:** No, when I first went to work for West Group in the area in 1973 it wasn't but a few years prior to that they were on the corner of Anderson Road and route 123 and when Jerry bought the farm and Rudy Sealy was his partner their original offices were in the old Sealy mansion right on route 123.

**Sue:** And what was the mansion like?

**Tom:** It was an old, I'll show you a picture, it was an old gothic mansion.

**Sue:** We can get a copy of that

**Tom:** Look at that later.

**Sue:** perhaps for the website sure.

**Tom:** And it was called Maplewood.

**Sue:** Oh, yes I saw that in another book I believe.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Okay, so.

**Tom:** But anyway the, I don't think there is over the last 40 years – I don't think there was ever any gifts and Jerry's office was right there.

**Sue:** And this Maplewood was



**Tom:** Had just been demolished in the late 1960's early 1970's.

**Sue:** Was it – you weren't able to save it?

**Tom:** It was really

**Sue:** It was that bad?

**Tom:** fallen down. It really was falling down.

**Sue:** It looks like the kind of thing that could be in Cape May, New Jersey.

**Tom:** Yep, absolutely.

**Sue:** It's beautiful.

**Tom:** Yeah, it was a – think of it back in the Civil War era, post Civil War era as just a magnificent house in the middle of a large farm. The barn was magnificent; there was a big barn associated with it.

**Sue:** Were Sealy mansion and Maplewood one in the same?

**Tom:** Yes.

**Sue:** Okay, also known as – here it's called Maplewood not Sealy Mansion.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Okay.

**Tom:** But we call it because of Colonel Sealy's wife was Martha Ulfelder and the Ulfelders; she was an Ulfelder and then a Sealy. Colonel Sealy married her and then they bought the farm from the Ulfelder family who all retired in Mexico, Dr. Ulfelder. But even in my era back in the day, back in the gravel pit days and all of that, all the old

**Sue:** When you say gravel pit explain a little what that is.

**Tom:** If you look at where Tysons II (Two) is now it was an active gravel pit. It was a big sand and gravel excavation they called it the pit.

**Sue:** Did that have to get filled in?

**Tom:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**Sue:** And what's there now?

**Tom:** Ah, Tysons II (two).

**Sue:** The whole Tysons II is on what use to be a gravel pit.

**Tom:** A gravel pit.

**Sue:** That was a heck of a fill job.

**Tom:** (Laughing) Ah, that's the other thing I find interesting and actually talking to and architect the other day – there's an enormous amount of topography in Tysons. Everybody looks at an aerial photograph and says well this is a big flat area. And if you look at the signal tower at the top of the hill where the water tower is

**Sue:** Where is that?

**Tom:** Up on International Drive, from International over to you know where route 123 crosses route 7.

**Sue:** Okay.

**Tom:** To the lowest part of Tysons which is down along the toll road where the Gannett building is – its 222 feet difference in elevation difference.

**Sue:** That's a lot.

**Tom:** And the difference on my Park Crest project from the top to the bottom on 13 acres is 100 feet in elevation.

**Sue:** So that's a challenge to build on?

**Tom:** It is.

**Sue:** Okay.

**Tom:** It really is – so as the properties develop and redevelop and all of that, it is not Phoenix Arizona flat land building. There are some real challenges through the development and redevelopment. And as we all say in the industry “all the good land is gone”. (Laughing)

**Sue:** Or God’s not making that anymore, yeah.

**Tom:** (laughing)

**Sue:** Well the land there other than having the gravel pit to fill in and having that elevation difference it’s being developed because strategically the location is so good.

**Tom:** Absolutely, yeah.

**Sue:** So the topography

**Tom:** This has been said time and time again if your Jerry, Tom and Chuck and Colonel Sealy and there’s a farm, a 75 acre farm and you’re at the corner, you know east west route 7, north south route 123 okay – and you go down and somebody’s looking at traces of a beltway around the Washington area and somebody’s kind of sketched that in – what a strategic visionary location and in the scheme of things.

**Sue:** Can you tell me a little about the history of route 7 and route 123 that area and I don’t mean like the last 50 years but what was there 200 years ago or 150 years ago?

**Tom:** Well they were both ah you know, they were both trade roads; very much trade roads. They were very; very if you follow up if you go up and down route 123 and route 7 it was and enormous bibliography of Civil war activity.

**Sue:** Many historic markers along the way okay.

**Tom:** And historic marks along the way. You know it was if you take Washington and you cross the river and you look at everything from Great Falls and swing all the way around to Alexandria and you were to draw that arc – except for major thoroughfares like Little River Turnpike and some of the old toll roads that was it.

**Sue:** And old toll roads such as?

**Tom:** Ah, Little River Turnpike used to be an old toll road. So they were all colonial era. I mean I've always been fascinated with – this book to me has always been a fascinating book and I've read it on several occasions.

**Sue:** The book on the history of Tysons Corner.

**Tom:** The history of Tysons Corner about really like a lot of Virginia there were a lot of large farms it was ah – Mr. Bless found out that the whole if you have the Potomac river down here and you have your at the edge of the Piedmont hum – a glacier must have come through here and somewhere they pushed out sand and gravel. And to have found this gold mine of sand and gravel in the middle – you know at the crossroads of the route 123 and route 7 so you could excavate it and transport it and turn it into concrete and all those type of things or whatever. I mean I personally this is not commonly shared but if you think through it one of the original well-springs of commerce at Tysons Corner was the gravel pit. Because there was product there and it was used to make concrete and there's a way to get it out and a way to transport it and everything else. There was no burgeoning industry or any commerce except for local little stores and gas stations at Crossroads like there are in rural America today. And Mr. Bless as you probably well know was a tremendous inventor. He's invented many, many things over the years they're still patented today. I never met

**Sue:** Such as?

**Tom:** Oh, he did

**Sue:** What is Mr. Bless's first name?

**Tom:** Um, Mr. Bless, I have no idea – I may know but I just – But ah in the gravel excavating business conveyer gear stuff, um different excavating chain rigs and stuff like that and small hand tools.

**Sue:** From heavy machinery to small hand tools?

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Sue:** That's a lot, okay.

**Tom:** So I mean I've been very fortunate even from 1973 on and in a few years that will be 40 years to watch it all grow and live with the pains of growth. I am one of those people who will never say traffic is bad in Tysons. Through traffic is terrible in Tyson's because you have to get – that's where the traffic is because it's on Routes 7 and 123 because they are major collectors in what is the Washington distribution system; but in terms of the next 20 years.

**Sue:** Tysons is still a trade route in a way.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Trade is still there but there is ah a vision that includes more residential.

**Tom:** Um hum.

**Sue:** Would you address that mix for me – what you think will happen.

**Tom:** It's interesting – there was an article in the Wall Street Journal just the other day that the allure of home ownership is gone. It will take two more generations maybe out great grandchildren will start thinking about the value of homes one of these days.

**Sue:** As in having your own place and your own place will not be

**Tom:** Oh yeah. Now it is shelter and since all of the residential in Tysons will be multi family of medium to high-rise it'll take very much an urban model form. And so look at how Brooklyn and Queens and all of the rail oriented or the train oriented getting from point A to point B. You are either living there to work there or you're living there to get on the train to work elsewhere. So I think over time I think the residential will lag and it's an economic reason. The master plan calls for all mid to high rise residential; and it's just as expensive to build as an office building. So you can't have families in high-rise residential that are too expensive to build.

**Sue:** What do you define as too expensive?

**Tom:** What use to be the mortgage from a family of four based on supply and demand will be the new rent.

**Sue:** Meaning?

**Tom:** Two to four thousand dollars a month will be the rent rate because people, it's not that you don't need a place to live and it's not that you probably couldn't afford a house it's just that you don't want to take the risk of a house. So you're therefore going to take your shelter money and you're going to buy the nicest place you can and the largest square footage you can that is the most kid friendly and family friendly as you can and those mortgage dollars are going to be converted to rent dollars.

**Sue:** Do you think this is a reaction to what's been happening with the foreclosures and mortgage and stuff?

**Tom:** Absolutely.

**Sue:** So the younger generation

**Tom:** Yep.

**Sue:** You predict this.

**Tom:** It think all kinds of things – the ability, you know we went all the way to this end of the spectrum with no documentation, no down payment if you could pass the mere test and were breathing you could get a home mortgage to this end of the spectrum where you've got to have credit scores of 700 or above and 20% down and um you know was eliminated because of this over compensation a huge element of the market that could have been the right balance buyers now out of the market.

We've had such a degradation of house pricing due to foreclosures and bank owned properties and everything else; so it's going to take years for that to recover.

**Sue:** Well this is also going to be a cultural mind set shift.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Do you have children?

**Tom:** I do.

**Sue:** And how do they feel about this?

**Tom:** Well my children are all in their – I've got from 35 to 40; I've got grandchildren ages three months to seven years.

**Sue:** Do you discuss this?

**Tom:** They are all in homes but they're in homes because we helped them get into homes.

**Sue:** Is this area too expensive for a young person?

**Tom:** I think so, I really do. And high-rise construction isn't going to help affordability. It's just an economic reality that high-rise is going to be very expensive to build and therefore's got to translate to a profit to a builder and translate to a rent. If anybody would have ever told me that the mid rents in Tysons today with its existing product would have ever reached \$2.50 a square foot.

**Sue:** As opposed to from?

**Tom:** Go to Chantilly and it's a dollar twenty.

**Sue:** Okay.

**Tom:** Might be in the buck eighty to two bucks in Alexandria and Arlington. So a one thousand square foot two bedroom apartment at two dollars is twenty five hundred dollars a month with no tax advantage. But I'm a two income family I've got an average income in Fairfax County of \$98,000 – I'm \$198 thousand a year I could qualify to buy a house but I'm not going to take the risk. I will not see appreciation like my parents and grandparents did so at least for the five to seven, seven to 10 year range buyers are going to be renters. And when you have

so much supply being put into the market place at one time under the master plan where we tried to balance jobs and whatever um there's no competition. There's nothing a developer can do about the international cost of concrete, steel, copper and all the things the Chinese keep the prices going. Prices have not come down in high-rise construction yet.

**Sue:** Ever. And have they come down on other construction?

**Tom:** No, I got a big bulletin from the National Association of Home Builders one of those big – we get what they call these red card notices on your computer. You get this red card notice or whatever. Dry wall has just gone up another 12% meaning dry wall is higher today than it was at the peak 2006 and 2007 when there was an enormous

**Sue:** And why is that?

**Tom:** The Chinese continue to grow and continue on import export balance of trade issues, control the price of commodities which go into building materials. We've had no relief on energy or fuel cost.

**Sue:** What kind of relief would be needed to make this a fairer playing field for you?

**Tom:** Believe it or not pricing in the 1981, 1982 depression but you know we had the pricing in 1981 and 1982 would be an equalizer that could make you compete and would make me want to build something of a high-rise residential that somebody ultimately had a consumer for.

**Sue:** Okay. Let me back up and ask you a question – you said mid and high-rise residential is what you see as being in Tysons and perhaps that might be the trend for the future. Won't that price out some families?

**Tom:** Yes.

**Sue:** So do you think Tysons at least 20 years from now might perhaps have a lot of singles and two family incomes and other alternate family arrangements as opposed to a four person family with two adults, two children?



**Tom:** Yeah, it'll become the Balston, kind of the Balston model. If you look at the Balston demographic it is 30% pairs that's two roommates sharing a rent or whatever the case may be. It will be the beginning family the husband and wife and maybe the first child if you have the two bedroom. But they won't like they have in the past move into the mini town, or the bigger town and then they buy the house with the yard. But as they are doing all of this they're moving further from work. They are moving to Chantilly and Centreville, to Prince William County, to Fauquier County, to Stafford County to whatever that's been the Washington growth model as classic families have evolved – it's moving out. We're trying to keep them in. I don't know economically how we are going to do that.

**Sue:** Do you discuss this with others?

**Tom:** Oh, all the time.

**Sue:** And so right now there's no foreseeable way to see.

**Tom:** Now I won't get off on the politics of the additional costs of affordable dwelling units and the additional cost of green buildings and all that cause that will all work itself out. I'm not worried about any of that. I'm worried about the base construction costs and providing to the classic two family income, my children, how they afford the urban model at Tysons Corner. Because the other element of that is all the land, all the guys that bought the land from the Indians for trinkets and whatever; the Jerry Halpins who bought farms that land is all crated and multiple times so you've got a disproportionate high land cost add to high construction cost. How do we in fact build to the new family demographic?

**Sue:** And the implications on schools and other systems will just start being a domino effect

**Tom:** Yep.

**Sue:** when all this happens as it has in Balston and other areas.

**Tom:** Yep, yep.

**Sue:** Besides the transportation, besides having rail what other transportation options will there be or are there going to be? Would you like to see bike lanes or some other alternate shuttle bus or something else?

**Tom:** I think the Master Plan and there I had nothing – I mean the entire transportation element of the Master Plan is beautiful. I mean you've got to do it all. I don't know how it all gets funded but you've got to do it.

You've got to have the collector routes, you've got to have the avenues and all the you know VDOT (Virginia Department of Transportation) has got to work on all these road sections and all of that. You've got to do the seven major, you know, interstate connectors and all of that or whatever. If you can execute the Tysons Corner Transportation Plan as envisioned, okay, I think that is essential to follow rail as closely as possible. And you got the chicken or the egg – how do you fund that if you don't have the tax base on the commercial side and the tax base on the residential side and you know you got some county funding and you're never going to get State funding.

So it's going to kind of be pay go, pay for it yourself. And how do you get that without the population that you need. It's the population, is the tax base going to grow at the rate the transportation infrastructure needs to grow; that's the question.

**Sue:** Now I understand that you are also involved in task forces um volunteer activities.

**Tom:** Um hum.

**Sue:** Can you tell me a little bit about what volunteer

**Tom:** Ah, well I have up until a week ago I have been the Chairman of the State Board of Housing and Community Development for the Commonwealth of Virginia. We now have a Republican Governor who elected not to reappoint me. I got my letter in the mail which happens every time we change parties or whatever. But ah

**Sue:** But what kind of change did you affect.

**Tom:** Oh, it was the most fab, it was the most rewarding of all the Boards that I have sat on I don't want to bore you with my resume

**Sue:** You're not.

**Tom:** the wholly I mean I've had the opportunity to sit on many Boards and Commissions and be presidents of many organizations over the year; but the most rewarding was the seven years I had on the State Board of Housing and Community Development; the last three as Chairman.

**Sue:** And why?

**Tom:** Because it does three things: basically is it is the building code center of the Commonwealth.

So my background all in entitlements and everything else forced me to learn building codes, zoning ordinances everything over the years. So I had a certain expertise.

So every code cycle the Commonwealth of Virginia adopts the - what's called the IRC the International Residential Code and the International Building Code for the Commonwealth of Virginia which requires massive amount of work and interplay with all of the interest groups and everything else to do that.

The other part of it is the State Board of Housing and Community Development we do all the affordable and poverty housing in the Commonwealth. We also unbeknownst to the world we've eradicated outdoor plumbing over many, many years. You can't believe how many houses didn't have indoor plumbing.

**Sue:** In parts of Virginia?

**Tom:** In parts of Virginia.

**Sue:** So that was one of the contributions in the time that you

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Sue:** were, okay.

**Tom:** Ah, we have gotten an enormous amount of TARP money on

**Sue:** TARP meaning?

**Tom:** the President's – what does TARP stand for – the federal – what does TARP stand for? Something recovery program. (Troubled Asset Relief Program)

**Sue:** Okay, part of this stimulus

**Tom:** Stimulus.

**Sue:** package.

**Tom:** Money filtered down from the Federal Government and we got it. We were chosen in the Commonwealth of Virginia to do mortgage relief, education, we have bought foreclosed houses and turned it into affordable housing.

**Sue:** And when you say we, who are you?

**Tom:** State Board of Housing.

**Sue:** State Board of Housing, okay.

**Tom:** So it was an enormous, it was a full time job that I had to add to my other full time jobs and being a father, grandfather, and husband. But it was just, you got a perspective statewide and at tremendous hard working Board; it was collegial and collaborative unlike a lot of these public boards you're on. Everybody kind of had the same mission. I'm a big Tolstoy advocate of the best work of life is for humanity; and I felt good about that.

**Sue:** Let me

**Tom:** Here's how I express that to my family or whatever – You've got to give back and you can tie it to your church and you can make contributions and you can support United Way or whatever but until you give blood sweat and tears on

a Board or Commission that's a hard working Board or Commission that's how you give back. Business has had its ups and downs but generally over the years has been good to me and this is how you give back.

**Sue:** Since this Board also looked at affordable housing does this area of Fairfax County, Providence District have adequate affordable housing?

**Tom:** Absolutely not.

**Sue:** How would you remedy that?

**Tom:** Well.

**Sue:** Is it possible to?

**Tom:** This is sometime we just get a couple of beers and we could do this for hours. We have in – Fairfax County is such an anomaly in the Commonwealth of Virginia; its a million people. It's a County Executive form of government. Many years ago and I don't know when we have a Housing Authority. We have an independent Housing Authority; and it operates differently than Housing Authorities all through the rest of the Commonwealth. And it's been successful but you've heard, well you may or may not have heard debate for years, and years, and years from a developers perspective money goes into that but you never see it come out in the form of shelter. Okay.

**Sue:** Now is that the difference that you were talking about?

**Tom:** Yeah. Housing Authorities all over the rest of the Commonwealth, Richmond, Tidewater, Southwest, you know Petersburg whatever – Housing Authority money goes in and boy it better go back out. And you see it in the form of housing. The reason here is that the Housing Authority, I don't know if it isn't got enough, isn't independent enough or whatever it is it's the greatest people, I love our Housing Authority people they really are advocates or whatever. But it's such a huge nut – a headline is to buy an apartment project in Reston and make it affordable housing okay. And we get one of those every three years whether we need it or not. In Richmond that happens not every day but that's a commonplace where they've taken a thousand rehab units and made it, taken it

from Section 8 to affordable housing. I mean it's just a different and - I think a lot of it has to do with the I think it's dependency or independency – I think a lot of it has to do with funding – I think a lot of it has to do with lack of opportunity. Land is too expensive for them to be proactive – buy land get a HUD 22 221D loan; find a competitor and put it out to market for competitive bidding, do joint ventures with builders for affordable housing. And part of the reason is there was kind of a feeling that when we had affordable housing ordinances 10% of this would be affordable housing, 12% of that would be affordable housing. Well nobody built affordable housing, they bought out of the affordable housing and the money went in but the affordable houses aren't coming out or the apartments or the towns or the condos or the co-ops or all those classic forms of housing that housing authorities do for affordable housing we just haven't seen that happen here in my and that's my personal opinion.

**Sue:** It sounds from the vision that you painted earlier of having more midrise and high rise for instance in Tysons Corner that you will have affluent families that do that but then you will have as you said affluent people moving further out if they want to have a house.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Sue:** So this area in the future unless it has affordable housing might be just a very different demographic from what it is now correct?

**Tom:** It'll look like the Rotunda.

**Sue:** Okay, which – how would you describe the Rotunda.

**Tom:** Very affluent population. It'll look like Park Crest Condominium building; it'll be an affluent population. Now I will say I will take care of it; I can't build them, I'll prove to you Linda Smyth I can't build these but I will go pay what they are worth. Now there is something interesting happening right now. There's two companies out there contacting Tysons developers – says I'll buy your ADU's.

**Sue:** ADU?

**Tom:** Affordable Dwelling Unit.

**Sue:** Um hum.

**Tom:** So you got a project and I see you're zoned a mixed use, a residential mixed use and so you guys are going to go build a high rise; I know you can't build them so I'm going to buy them from you and I'll say fine and I'll prove to the County that I have provided the economics of my affordable dwelling units. They will take that money that I have sold them for because there's a value associated with an affordable dwelling unit. And they will go get Federal and State financing and you'll start seeing affordable housing projects happening; but we've taken them and we've moved them to Centerville, Chantilly, you know Gainesville.

**Sue:** Elsewhere than Providence District.

**Tom:** Elsewhere than Providence District. I'm afraid that's what's going to happen.

**Sue:** That's your prediction on this.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Okay.

**Tom:** That's why I do not think the residential – if you take the classic zoning dream that they always talk about this in Loudoun County and the very large PUDs (*Planned Unit Developments*), Broadlands and Brambleton and all of that.

Loudoun County doesn't have a bad idea where every year jobs are equal to rooftops. And they do a lot of zoning that says you can build yourself a hundred houses Mr. Developer but you also have to provide your 2 million square feet of office at the same time. We don't have anything in the Master Plan that precludes – you're going to see the best word of buffet and there's filet and then there's short steak and then there's hamburger. And you're going to see a lot of the filet go first. And that's going to be what does the market demand on the office side, the nonresidential side. And it's all going to occur around the rail stations. And then we have this umbrella that takes the neighborhoods away

from the rail stations and that's going to be mid and high rise out here. Man, it's going to be a while before that starts to evolve I think. Now, where there's jobs okay, and there's more of a demand of population live work that will provide some impetus if I could afford to build it; just a prediction.

**Sue:** Okay. Thanks for sharing that vision. Let me ask you – you like this area, it sounds like you work all the time. What do you do for fun what kind of leisure activity?

**Tom:** Ah, we have the most fun in the world; we have a small farm in Strasburg, Virginia an hour away. We're there most weekends of the year because we see more of our kids and grandkids at the farm then we do right here in hometown Vienna. And that's kind of my hobby, I don't play golf, I don't

**Sue:** What do you do on the farm; do you grow vegetables, any apples?

**Tom:** No, we have a, we actually lease a major part of the farm to a farmer who does corn and soy beans. But there's enough out there, we're right on the river, we have three thousand linear feet of frontage on the north fork of the river. So we have a big garden, we do a lot of landscaping; do a lot of stuff down on the river when the kids are out. In the winter time I've got you know almost 40 acres of corn fields we can snow shoe and everything else. It clearly is where I go to rest my mind and overwork my body. (Laughing)

**Sue:** So you have development here and it's very urban and you're busy and this is where you go for your relaxation to your farm.

**Tom:** I do yep.

**Sue:** Excellent, is there anything else you want to tell me or add about

**Tom:** No.

**Sue:** Providence District or this project.

**Tom:** I really don't, I just have truly, truly as you get older in life and you reflect more



**Sue:** How old are you?

**Tom:** 63. Not Jerry Halpin at 86 but in the same number of years Jerry's had West Gate and West Park and we've all watched Tysons grow I will someday take my grandchildren around and I'll be able to touch most of what I have done over my life. And that is very gratifying.

**Sue:** Indeed. Thank you very much.

**Tom:** Okay.